

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1-12. (canceled)

13. (previously presented) A filter element comprising a plurality of filter medium layers joined together such that a fluid to be filtered flows successively through the layers in a flow direction commencing with an inflow layer and ending with a discharge layer, wherein successive layers in said flow direction exhibit an increasing degree of separation and a decreasing storage capacity for particles to be filtered out of said fluid, and wherein said inflow layer is comprised of synthetic fibers of a melt-blown nonwoven web with a fiber diameter of about 2 μm or less and a weight per unit area of about 15 to 150 g/m^2 , and said discharge layer is comprised of a predominantly cellulose-containing pre-compressed filter paper having a weight per unit area of about 50 to 200 g/m^2 .

14. (canceled)

15. (previously presented) A filter element according to claim 13, wherein at least three filter medium layers are joined together; wherein the discharge layer is a predominantly cellulose-containing filter paper which serves primarily to stabilize the filter element; wherein all the other layers are nonwoven webs made of synthetic fibers, and wherein said other layers in the direction of flow through the filter successively exhibit an increased degree of separation and a decreased storage capacity for particles to be filtered out from the fluid flowing through the filter element.

16. (previously presented) A filter element according to claim 15, wherein an intermediate filter medium layer located between the inflow-side filter medium and the

outflow-side filter medium comprises a compressed melt-blown nonwoven web having a weight per unit area of 15 to 150 g/m².

17. (previously presented) A filter element according to claim 13, wherein the filter media joined together to form the filter element are star-folded.

18. (previously presented) A filter element according to claim 13, wherein the layers of filter medium are welded together by ultrasound.

19. (previously presented) A filter element according to claim 13, wherein the filter medium is folded to form pleats and wherein the layers of filter medium are joined together by surface pressure during a folding process.

20. (previously presented) A filter element according to claim 13, wherein the layers of filter medium are adhesively bonded together by gluing with powdered adhesive or with a hot melt impregnating agent.

21. (previously presented) A filter element according to claim 13, wherein at least one of the cellulose-containing filter layers includes up to but not including 50% of synthetic fibers.

22. (previously presented) A filter element according to claim 21, wherein said synthetic fibers are polyester fibers or glass fibers.

23-24. (canceled)

25. (withdrawn) A filter element comprising a plurality of filter medium layers joined together such that a fluid to be filtered flows successively through the layers in a flow

direction commencing with an inflow layer and ending with a discharge layer, wherein successive layers in said flow direction exhibit an increasing degree of separation and a decreasing storage capacity for particles to be filtered out of said fluid, and wherein said inflow layer is comprised of a predominantly cellulose-containing filter paper with a weight per unit area of 50 to 200 g/m², and said discharge layer is comprised of a predominantly cellulose-containing filter paper with a weight per unit area of 50 to 200 g/m².

26. (withdrawn) A filter element according to claim 25, wherein the inflow layer is a predominantly cellulose-containing filter paper with a weight of 50 to 200 g/m² and having a one-sided impregnating coating on the outflow side of the filter medium, and wherein the discharge layer is a continuously impregnated, predominantly cellulose-containing filter paper with a weight of 50 to 200 g/m².

27. (withdrawn) A filter element according to claim 25, wherein the filter media joined together to form the filter element are star-folded.

28. (withdrawn) A filter element according to claim 25, wherein the layers of filter medium are welded together by ultrasound.

29. (withdrawn) A filter element according to claim 25, wherein the layers of filter medium are joined together by surface pressure during a folding process.

30. (withdrawn) A filter element according to claim 25, wherein the layers of filter medium are adhesively bonded together by gluing with powdered adhesive or with a hot melt impregnating agent.

31. (withdrawn) A filter element according to claim 25, wherein at least one of the cellulose-containing filter layers includes up to 50% of synthetic fibers.

32. (withdrawn) A filter element according to claim 31, wherein said synthetic fibers are polyester fibers or glass fibers.

33. (withdrawn) A filter element according to claim 25, wherein the filter element is disposed in a lubricating oil circuit of an internal combustion engine.

34. (withdrawn) A filter element according to claim 25, wherein said filter element is disposed in a fuel line of an internal combustion engine.

35. (previously presented) A filter element comprising a plurality of filter medium layers joined together such that a fluid to be filtered flows successively through the layers in a flow direction commencing with an inflow layer and ending with a discharge layer, wherein successive layers in said flow direction exhibit an increasing degree of separation and a decreasing storage capacity for particles to be filtered out of said fluid, and wherein said inflow layer is comprised of synthetic fibers of a melt-blown nonwoven web with a fiber diameter of about 2 μm or less and a weight per unit area of about 15 to 150 g/m^2 or of a predominantly cellulose-containing filter paper, with a weight per unit area of 50 to 200 g/m^2 , and said discharge layer is comprised of a predominantly cellulose-containing pre-compressed filter paper having a weight per unit area of about 50 to 200 g/m^2 .

36. (previously presented) A filter element comprising a plurality of filter medium layers joined together such that a fluid to be filtered flows successively through the layers in a flow direction commencing with an inflow layer and ending with a discharge layer, wherein successive layers in said flow direction exhibit an increasing degree of separation and a decreasing storage capacity for particles to be filtered out of said fluid, and wherein said inflow layer is comprised of synthetic fibers of a melt-blown nonwoven web with a fiber diameter of about 2 μm or less and a weight per unit area of about 15 to 150 g/m^2 , and said discharge layer is comprised of a predominantly cellulose-containing pre-compressed filter paper having a weight per unit area of at least about 50 g/m^2 .